

Introduction

Welcome to 16B lab! We are so excited to have you.

The main goal of lab is for you to gain hands-on experience applying concepts from lecture. You will build your physical intuition and confidence with hands-on problem-solving skills, including critical thinking, design thinking, and tenacity via debugging. If you can't fix a bug right away, stay calm and think through the problem: use what you know to figure out what you expect to be going on at each node of your circuit, and know how to correctly use the lab equipment to test your predictions. This goal subsumes the following subgoals:

1. Build the confidence to get started on something when you don't know how it will end.
2. Know how to check your work without merely checking each step along the way.
3. Know how to simplify a problem and identify its base cases.
4. Understand how to try different approaches without knowing whether they will work, and how to recognize when in fact it has or has not worked.
5. Understand how to try these approaches systematically instead of randomly, and be able to explicitly express what tentative assumptions you are making or which possibilities you discover while exploring.
6. Know how to work backwards — assuming that you could somehow by magic get to intermediate point X, how could that help you get to the goal? And, be able to take initiative and explore whether you can in fact get to intermediate point X.
7. Be able to take given components and use them to get the result that you want.

We want lab to be a positive experience for everyone; in fact, the point of lab is to be rewarding and satisfying. However, this does not mean that lab is supposed to be easy. The staff are here to support you and provide you with the resources (including mental schema) you need as you build the perseverance to debug, but we will never do your work for you. That being said, if you are having a hard time or feel that you are falling behind in the class as a whole, please do not hesitate to reach out to your lab GSI: first and foremost, we are here to help you.

Grading and Policies

Lab is worth 15% of your final grade for 16B. We believe it is possible for every student to get a perfect lab score if you work diligently during your lab section and follow the tips outlined in the final section.

- **Attendance is mandatory, and you *MUST* come to your assigned lab section as per CalCentral.** This is because this class is very full, and lab sections only have enough staff to support the students registered for that section.
- Labs are graded on an all-or-nothing basis.* Being checked off on time means that you have received full credit for the lab. A lab is considered “on-time” if you are checked off any time before your next lab section: i.e., you have one week to complete each lab. If your lab is late, 50% of the credit will be deducted. Extensions are given at the discretion of your lab GSI. Checkoffs can be viewed on Gradescope.
- *TAs will accept high-effort, close-to-done labs at their discretion for full credit given thorough understanding of the lab. This is to reduce overflow and stress as much as possible.
- If you did not finish your lab in your section, look at the [class schedule](#), find a section with open seats that works for **both** you and your partners, and email **both** the GSI that leads that section and your normal section's GSI to ask if they have space for you in their section. If you attend a section without prior explicit approval, you might not receive help.
- **All** partners must be present for checkoff. You will be working and getting checked off in your groups, but credit will be given on an individual basis. You must have a functional circuit to be able to receive credit. To promote a cooperative atmosphere, in order for anyone in your group to get credit for the current lab, the majority of your group (so 3/4 or 2/3 partners) must have working circuits. Groups cannot get checked off for the next lab until all students in a group have gotten credit for the previous lab. This means your entire group must be checked off before completing the next lab.

- Circuits must be kept neat, according to circuit building guidelines

Within lab, grading is broken into:

Labs (4 total)	40%
Project	60%

In order to encourage spreading out project work throughout the semester, each week will have checkpoints that must be met in order to receive credit for that lab. Checkpoints must be checked off within **1 week** of assignment for full credit - late labs are accepted for 50% credit. The project breakdown is as follows:

Checkpoints (5 total)	50%
Integration/Final Demo	25%
Final Report	25%

Lab Structure

Labs are 3 hours long, and are led by one GSI and staffed by several lab assistants. Partway through the lab, several more lab assistants and/or GSIs will arrive to help. Every lab will start with a short lecture (approx. 15 minutes in length) given by your lab GSI over Zoom that will give you an overview of the lab, review the relevant theory, and give you useful tips that will help you avoid common mistakes. After the lecture, you will have the rest of the lab period to work. If you need assistance during the lab period, you can submit a help form and a TA/lab assistant will join your Zoom call when they are available. The process for checkoff is similar; you will fill out a checkoff request form and a TA will join your Zoom call. **You MUST have your checkoff request submitted 10 minutes before the end of lab** to give you a bit of a time buffer in case the queue is long so that staff can get to you before the next section starts.

You will work in groups of 3 to 4 with other students in your section. Ideally this group will be the same each week, but you can change groups until the project starts. Once the project starts, you must stay with your group through the rest of the semester.

Syllabus

Dates	Lab	Overview	Goals
8/26-8/30	Syllabus Week	No Lab	
8/31-9/7	No Lab		
9/8-9/14	Lab 1: Debugging	Build and debug an inverting amplifier.	Review digital logic, practice good circuit-building and debugging techniques, and refamiliarize yourself with lab equipment.
9/16-9/22	Lab 2: DAC/ADC	Build a 4-bit DAC using the MSP430 and a resistor net. Modify the DAC to build a 4-bit SAR ADC by adding a comparator and implementing binary search.	Review superposition and continue familiarizing yourself with the MSP430.
9/23-9/29	Lab 3: Color Organ I	Use the mic board and filters to illuminate different LEDs depending on sound frequency.	Explore low-pass, high-pass, and band-pass filters.
9/30-10/6	Buffer Days	No Lab	Finish Color Organ.
10/7-10/13	Project Part 1: Front End Circuits	Build car and test motor behavior.	Build the front-end circuitry for the car (neatly, to minimize chances of wires coming loose later)
10/14-10/18	Buffer Days	No Lab	Use this time to finish Front End.
10/19-10/25	Project Part 2: System ID	Profile motor behavior and determine operating point.	Explore modeling and linearization using least-squares as a precursor to controls.
10/26-11/1	Buffer Days	No Lab	Use this time to catch up on lab.
11/2-11/8	Project Part 3: Closed-Loop Control	Implement and fine-tune closed-loop model to make car go straight.	Explore discrete state-space control via eigenvalue placement.
11/9-11/15	Buffer Days	No Lab	Use this time to catch up on lab.
11/16-11/22	Project Part 4: Advanced Controls	Make car turn.	Program the car with a unique sequence of movements.
11/23-11/24	No Lab	No Lab	Enjoy your 2 days before Thanksgiving Break
THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/25-11/29			
11/30-12/6	Buffer Days	No Lab	Use this time to finish whatever labs you have left.
12/7-12/20	RRR Week/Finals Week	No Lab	
SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.			

LPTs: Lab Pro Tips

Following these tips will ensure you succeed in and get the most out of lab.

1. Read through the lab note and lab notebook before coming to lab. Think carefully about what possible bugs you may encounter, or which parts of the lab will take longest, and have a plan for avoiding those bugs and staying on-track time-wise.
2. If there is a lab problem on the homework, make sure you do it prior to your lab section. We put these problems on the homework to save you as much time as possible in lab and perhaps even help you finish early. This and tip number 1 are the top tips for making sure that you finish on time and get the most out of lab — if you follow these tips, you won't be scrambling to finish and will have the time to develop a deep understanding of the lab.
3. Talk to the other students in lab, not just your partner(s). Utilize Piazza and other electronic platforms to ask others if they have encountered similar bugs and what they have tried to fix it. Or, if you've already fixed that bug, offer them some pointers.
4. As you're working through the lab, formulate sanity-check questions that allow you to quickly check if there is something wrong with your circuit. Ex: *What should VDD and VSS be? What voltage do I expect at this node? What do I expect the signal at this node to look like?*
5. Get to know your lab partner(s). You will be working with them all semester, including the entirety of the project. This also extends to the other students in your section. It's much easier to work with friends!